

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

During the year 2000, persecution, armed conflict and political upheavals resulted in a number of new refugee situations which UNHCR endeavoured to address in the face of serious funding shortfalls. The year will be remembered for the brutal murders of four UNHCR staff members: three in West Timor and one in Guinea. These deaths, together with a number of other serious security incidents during the year, highlighted the risks humanitarian workers face. They reaffirmed the need for aid agencies, governments and the international community to work more effectively to ensure their safety.

While there were no emergencies on the scale of the 1999 Kosovo crisis, conflict in different parts of the world continued to displace populations both within and beyond their countries' borders and stood in the way of repatriation and reintegration. The war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and internal armed conflict in countries such as Afghanistan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Russian Federation (Chechnya) and Sierra Leone received much media coverage. But there were many other conflicts affecting the lives of millions of civilians which were less well publicised. Security problems often restricted UNHCR's access to populations of concern and curtailed its ability to protect both refugees and staff.

In some cases, as instability spread across entire regions, countries found themselves receiving and generating refugees at the same time. In the DRC, for example, hundreds of thousands were internally displaced and over 140,000 Congolese fled to nearby countries, while at the same time over 80,000 refugees arrived in the DRC seeking refuge from conflicts elsewhere. The High Commissioner called this situation a paradox that "shows the regional dimension of the crisis, but also the profound despair of people seeking safety."

The year was also marked by devastating natural disasters, which hampered assistance efforts and exacerbated already difficult humanitarian situations. Floods in Southern Africa and West Timor (Indonesia), and the worst droughts in recent memory in Afghanistan and the East and Horn of Africa affected refugees, internally displaced people and local populations alike, necessitating increased humanitarian assistance from UNHCR and other agencies.

While the number of persons of concern to UNHCR decreased slightly from 22.3 million in 1999 to 21.1 million in 2000, UNHCR continued its efforts to find

durable solutions for refugees in the form of voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to third countries. Altogether, over 790,000 persons repatriated during 2000.

MAJOR POPULATION DISPLACEMENTS

Continued or renewed armed conflict was the major cause of refugee outflows in Africa. In the East and Horn of Africa, despite negotiations with the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and efforts by the UN to mediate, fighting broke out again in May between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Some 97,000 Eritreans fled, the majority taking refuge in Sudan, while over one million people were internally displaced. In Sudan itself, ongoing clashes between government and opposition forces led to further internal displacement as well as a regular stream of refugees into neighbouring countries. Whereas the northern parts of Somalia experienced relative peace and stability, allowing for the voluntary return of some 45,000 refugees in 2000, large parts of central and southern Somalia remained highly insecure, despite the establishment of a Transitional National Government in August. Hence, thousands of long-term Somali refugees found themselves with no immediate prospects for return. The severe drought that ravaged the region during the year exacerbated both the causes and effects of displacement and aggravated the plight of millions of people.

The Great Lakes region was plagued by both internal and inter-state conflict, marked by repeated violations of the Lusaka cease-fire agreement and stalled peace processes. Over a hundred thousand people fled the fighting in the DRC, going mostly to Tanzania, Zambia and the Republic of the Congo. In addition, the number of internally displaced people was estimated to be 1.8 million. Violence also continued in Burundi, despite the signing of the Arusha peace agreement in August. This prompted some 80,000 people to cross into Tanzania. As a result, the number of Burundian refugees in Tanzania swelled to nearly 500,000. Although security in Rwanda had improved in previous years, renewed fighting in the south-east led to the flight of over 10,000 refugees, mostly to Uganda and Tanzania. Similarly, violence in Uganda prompted some 10,000 refugees to flee the country, most of them going to the DRC.

The consequences of instability in the Great Lakes region were felt even in Southern Africa, which became



the haven for tens of thousands of refugees. In Angola, the number of internally displaced persons rose to some 300,000 as a result of the ongoing civil war, while another 80,000 fled the country. Zambia was particularly affected, receiving thousands of refugees from both the Great Lakes region and Angola. Severe floods in the region further exacerbated an already precarious humanitarian situation.

In West and Central Africa there was widespread violence and political unrest during the year. Despite optimism about the Lomé peace agreement, Sierra Leone's civil war continued unabated in parts of the country, with rebel attacks prompting the departure of Sierra Leoneans to Guinea and Liberia. While there were no major refugee outflows from Guinea, there was continued violence and insecurity in the areas bordering Sierra Leone and Liberia. Following the killing of the head of the UNHCR office in Macenta and the kidnapping of two of its staff members, UNHCR withdrew its entire staff to Conakry and temporarily suspended its repatriation and assistance activities. Hundreds of thousands of refugees, mainly from Sierra Leone and Liberia, were once again displaced within Guinea as a direct result of the conflict. In response, UNHCR deployed three emergency teams in late December to address the humanitarian crisis affecting refugees in southern Guinea.

As efforts were made to facilitate voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity to Afghanistan, ethnic clashes,

political tension, human rights violations and a severe drought within the country combined to drive ever larger numbers of people abroad. In the biggest exodus of the year, over a million Afghans fled, most of them going to Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. At the same time, hundreds of thousands were displaced internally. At the end of the year, Afghans were continuing to enter Pakistan at a rate of 200 to 250 per day. Roughly 10,000 more were exposed on a series of islands in the river that constitutes the Afghan/Tajik border.

In South Asia, continued violence between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE) led to the internal displacement of some 170,000 Sri Lankans, bringing the total number of internally displaced people in the country to about 700,000.

In East Asia and the Pacific, the focus was mainly on the refugee camps in West Timor (Indonesia), which remained highly volatile. Militia violence was widespread and it became almost impossible to ensure the protection of refugees. Following the murder of three UNHCR staff members in Atambua on 6 September, UNHCR evacuated its entire staff and suspended all operations in West Timor. By then, UNHCR had assisted 49,000 East Timorese to repatriate, leaving an estimated 90,000 refugees in camps in West Timor.

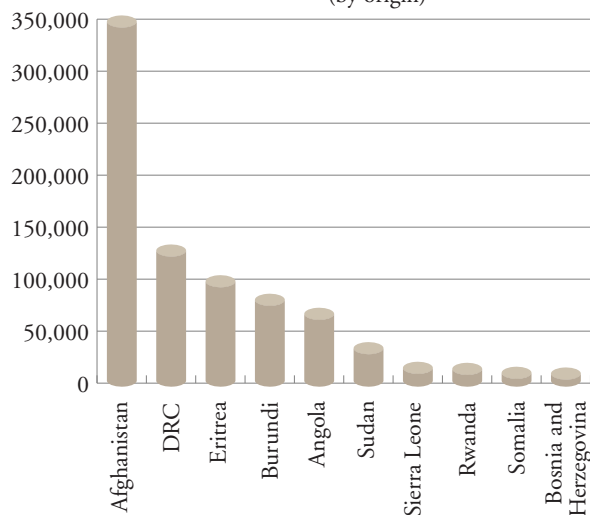
The situation in Eastern Europe was dominated by the conflict in Chechnya (Russian Federation). Persistent

fighting exacerbated the situation of nearly 490,000 internally displaced people within the Federation, some 60,000 of whom were newly displaced in 2000. The spontaneous return of some 70,000 people over the course of the year was thus almost matched by the scope of the new displacement.

In South-Eastern Europe, ethnic tension and violence in Kosovo (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) continued to prevent large numbers of people from returning to their places of origin, while inter-ethnic strife in southern Serbia led new groups of displaced people to seek safety in Kosovo. Far-reaching political changes in the Federal Republic towards the end of the year raised hopes for durable solutions in the form of repatriation or local settlement throughout the region.

In the Americas, much attention was focused on Colombia, where conflict between government security forces, paramilitary organisations and guerrillas resulted in massacres, targeted assassinations and general intimidation campaigns. Some 15,000 people fled to neighbouring countries while an estimated 128,000 (according to government statistics) were internally displaced. (Some NGO estimates put the number at three times as high). In some cases, the same people were displaced several times. In total, up to 1.5 million Colombians are believed to have been displaced since 1996.

Top 10 *Prima Facie* Refugee Outflows in 2000 (by origin)



REFUGEE - HOSTING AREAS

States hosting large refugee populations often accommodate these people in border areas close to the conflict which they have fled. As a result, in many instances States have found themselves having to contend with not only the burden of hosting refugees, but with the

added risk of conflict spilling over their borders. The international community has a particular responsibility to support countries hosting large refugee populations, in accordance with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

The Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan both host large and long-standing refugee populations. Both countries continued to experience a steady influx from Afghanistan. The Islamic Republic received nearly 350,000 refugees over the course of the year, bringing its total to over 1.5 million. Meanwhile, the arrival of almost 880,000 Afghans in Pakistan put the total number of refugees there at some two million, making Pakistan the country with the largest refugee population in the world.

Tanzania, a country, which has been receiving refugees for decades, continued to be a primary destination for refugees fleeing the various conflicts in the Great Lakes region. Some 130,000 new arrivals, mostly from Burundi, the DRC and Rwanda, brought the total number of refugees in Tanzania to some 680,000. This represents the largest refugee population in Africa. Zambia was also strongly affected, receiving some 50,000 refugees from Angola, Burundi, the DRC and Rwanda. As a result, the total number of people of concern to UNHCR in Zambia reached 250,000. Because of its proximity to several conflicts, the country also faced the problem of armed elements interspersed with newly arriving refugees. As with Tanzania, this raised concerns about ways of separating armed elements from civilians to preserve the civilian nature of asylum. In West Africa, Guinea – which was already hosting the second largest refugee population in Africa – received another 26,000 Sierra Leoneans and Liberians during the year. The majority of its 430,000 refugees have been there for some ten years. Raids along Guinea's borders with Sierra Leone and Liberia further complicated efforts to provide protection and assistance.

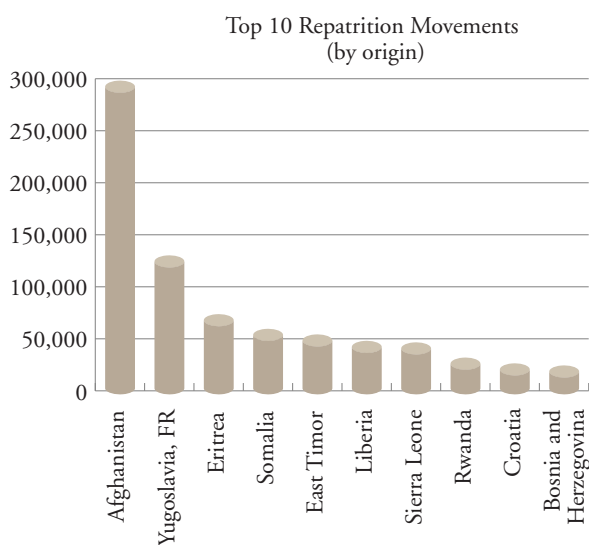
MOVING TOWARDS SOLUTIONS

During the year, over 790,000 refugees repatriated voluntarily to their country of origin. Afghanistan witnessed the largest number of repatriations with approximately 290,000 returning, mostly from the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. The second largest return movement involved some 125,000 refugees returning to the Kosovo province of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, while Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina also saw significant numbers of refugees coming home. Other movements included the return of some 68,000

Eritreans from Sudan and over 45,000 Somalis from Ethiopia. Some 49,000 East Timorese returned during the year, bringing the total number of returns there to 174,000 since October 1999. Liberia, Sierra Leone and Rwanda also welcomed significant numbers of returnees during the year. In addition, some 39,000 individuals were assisted to resettle in third countries.

Furthermore, significant moves were made toward the eventual resolution of a number of long-standing refugee situations. In March, UNHCR invoked the Cessation Clause for pre-1991 Ethiopian refugees. Subsequently, refugees in this category who wished to repatriate were assisted to do so, while those who requested continued refugee status were assessed on a case by case basis. In December, UNHCR closed its office in Guinea-Bissau, following the conclusion of the repatriation of refugees from Guinea. The organised return of Chadians from the Central African Republic and Cameroon was also completed during the year.

These successes notwithstanding, UNHCR's efforts to find durable solutions for refugees were often frustrated

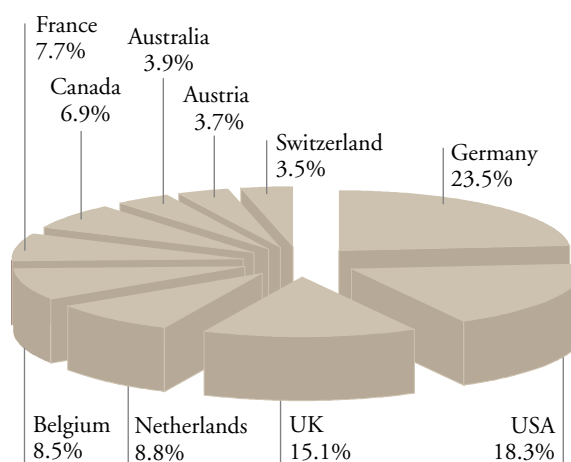


by continued conflicts forestalling voluntary repatriation, as well as by limited opportunities for local integration or resettlement to third countries.

ASYLUM FLOWS

Some 630,000 asylum applications were lodged in 39 industrialised countries during 2000, mostly in North America and Europe. This number represents a three per cent decrease from 1999, when 648,000 applications were reported. Germany received the highest number of applications, followed by the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Belgium. Refugees from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia accounted for the most applications (9.3 per cent), fol-

Percentage of Asylum Applications (total 499,648):
Main Industrialised Countries



lowed by refugees originating from Iraq (6.3 per cent) and Afghanistan (5.8 per cent).

ORGANISATIONAL CHALLENGES AND DILEMMAS

Security

A multitude of security incidents around the world included, *inter alia*, forced conscription of refugees, sexual and gender-based violence, inter-clan fighting, militia clashes and mass riots. As UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies attempted to protect and assist some of the world's most destitute populations, often located in unstable and dangerous areas, the risks faced by humanitarian workers reached unprecedented levels. The murder and abduction of UNHCR staff members was striking evidence of this. Since January 1992, 198 United Nations workers have lost their lives, while another 240 have been kidnapped or taken hostage. The specific targeting of humanitarian workers has become a trend that must be condemned and averted.

To address this central issue of security of both refugees and staff, UNHCR instituted a number of organisational changes (discussed in the chapters on Global Operations and Headquarters) following a comprehensive review of its emergency preparedness and response structures as well as its staff security policies and procedures. UNHCR has increased co-ordination with the Office of the UN Security Co-ordinator (UNSECOORD), while the entire United Nations system is subject to comprehensive security evaluations. An initiative in the UN General Assembly aims to develop a protocol to the 1994 Convention on the Safety of the United Nations and

Associated Personnel, extending full international legal protection to persons engaged in humanitarian operations. The UN Secretary-General is also calling upon nations to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which would make attacks on humanitarian workers a war crime. Stronger co-operation between humanitarian agencies, peacekeeping forces, governments and their militaries could reduce security threats and improve protection for refugees and humanitarian workers alike.

Internally Displaced Persons

Just as conflict, instability and persecution prompted millions of people to flee their countries, similar factors displaced many others within their own countries. Many of the internally displaced thus found themselves in refugee-like situations, uprooted and with limited or no access to protection, food, shelter, health services or social infrastructure. Globally, UNHCR extended protection and assistance to an estimated five million internally displaced persons in places as far apart as Azerbaijan, Colombia and Angola. The largest increases in internally displaced populations in 2000 were in Eritrea (where the total number rose to over one million) and Afghanistan (where some 500,000 were newly displaced). Meanwhile, significant numbers of people remain internally displaced in other countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, the DRC, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Sudan, with few solutions in sight for many of these people. The political and practical difficulties of providing humanitarian assistance to the internally displaced in remote and inhospitable locations were compounded by the fact that armed groups and government authorities often denied passage to humanitarian organisations.

Bridging the Gap Between Humanitarian Assistance and Development

One of the most difficult tasks for UNHCR was the reintegration of refugees in post-conflict situations. During the year UNHCR launched several “partnership initiatives” as a follow-up to the roundtable hosted by the Brookings Institution in 1999. These were aimed at addressing assistance gaps and at ensuring greater co-operation between humanitarian and development agencies in societies in transition. Unfortunately, initiatives in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone did not progress as anticipated, largely due to the instability and security problems in West Africa. However, commitment to the Brookings Process was renewed at a meeting in November, when humanitarian and development actors – including NGOs, UN organisations and donors – reaffirmed the need to ensure durable reintegration.

As a result of this meeting, UNHCR has agreed to further pursue “partner initiatives” in the Republic of the Congo and Rwanda in 2001.

Coupled with the efforts of the Brookings Process, UNHCR launched a project together with the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School, entitled “Imagine Co-existence”. The project aims “to promote co-existence in the short term during post-conflict reintegration, in order to prevent the recurrence of violence in divided communities and to promote long-term reconciliation.” In pursuit of this goal, UNHCR initiated pilot projects in Rwanda and Bosnia and Herzegovina, attempting to further co-existence through community-based income-generating activities which bring different communities together.

Linking Peace-keeping and Peace-building

Recognising the need for better co-ordination between peace-keeping and peace-building, the Brahimi Panel, convened by the UN Secretary-General on 7 March 2000, made a number of critical observations regarding this co-ordination gap. The resulting report, which contained a number of recommendations for the General Assembly to enact, had far-reaching implications for UN agencies including UNHCR. The Office contributed to the process, drawing on its particular expertise in areas such as peace-building, staff security and camp security. UNHCR has also been participating actively in the follow-up to the Brahimi report, which is an ongoing process within and between UN agencies.

HIV/AIDS

Refugees are particularly affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, as many of them lack access to sufficient health care and reproductive health services, which are essential to prevent the spread of the disease and to ease the suffering of those who have contracted it. A UNAIDS report published in November 2000 found one in 100 adults to have AIDS or be infected with the HIV virus. Sub-Saharan Africa, a region hosting millions of refugees, was shown to account for 70 per cent of the total cases and an even greater percentage of related deaths. By November, three million people worldwide had already died during the year from complications arising from HIV/AIDS and an estimated 5.3 million had been newly infected, bringing the world's total infected population to a staggering 36.1 million. To address the exponential growth of this problem, UNHCR focused on strengthening reproductive health education and services, especially among young refugees in southern Africa, and also combined its efforts with refugee-hosting governments.

Commemorating UNHCR's 50th Anniversary in 2000

On 14 December 1950, the UN General Assembly adopted the Statute of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Half a century later, UNHCR's work is far from done. To mark UNHCR's 50th Anniversary, a range of activities took place around the world. The "Friends of UNHCR" also created the UNHCR-50 Foundation on 14 January 2000 to help organise activities and set up the Refugee Education Trust. The purpose of all these activities was to raise public awareness of refugee issues and to draw attention to the important contributions that refugees so often make in the societies in which they find themselves.

On 14 December, UNHCR and the UNHCR-50 Foundation organised an event to mark the anniversary with contributions from the Swiss federal authorities, the Canton and City of Geneva as well as ten local corporations. Geneva's landmark, the *jet d'eau*, was illuminated in blue and UNHCR flags were flying on the main Mont-Blanc bridge. Thousands of candles were set afloat down the River Rhone to represent the hopes of millions of refugees. A musical event, Refugee Voices, highlighted the evening with singers Arja Saijonmaa and Youssou N'Dour as masters of ceremony. Famous refugee musicians, such as Geoffrey Oryema and the Burundi Drummers, performed alongside up-and-coming artists like Rasha and Keinaan. A special band and chorus formed the largest and most diverse single group of refugee musicians ever gathered. The event also included retrospective and contemporary video features of refugee situations across the world and a tribute to the outgoing High Commissioner, Sadako Ogata.

The Refugee Education Trust was launched on the same day as an independent fund created to provide post-primary education to refugee children and adolescents. The fund hopes to address the large discrepancy between enrolment in secondary school among refugees (three per cent) and the average enrolment of nationals in developing countries (18 per cent). Each year, 30,000 refugee children finish primary school, but few are able to continue their education. Giving them access to post-primary education means a vital investment in their future.

The public awareness campaign **R**ESPECT also commenced on 14 December. It featured prominent former refugees such as US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, writer Isabel Allende, Nobel Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu and internet entrepreneur Sieng Van Tran in a TV advertisement set to Aretha Franklin's song 'Respect'.

UNHCR also produced a set of posters illustrating the main challenges of the last 50 years. These were used by many offices, often in co-operation with governments and partners, in commemorative events. A photo exhibition in the Ludwig Museum in Köln, Germany, combined with a fund raising event for the Refugee Education Trust, and a travelling exhibition in the USA were just two such events. A special 50th Anniversary edition of *The State of the World's Refugees* was published in November 2000. Many activities had been running since the middle of the year, including exhibitions by refugee artists, a "gallery" of prominent refugees available on the internet, the sale of commemorative stamps, seminars, drama and music festivals and sports activities. Full details are available on UNHCR's anniversary website: www.unhcr-50.org.

Special Nansen Medals

For the occasion of UNHCR's 50th Anniversary, the Nansen Committee issued five medals. Four regional Nansen awards for former refugees were presented in separate ceremonies in Addis Ababa (to Abunde Paulos), Phnom Penh (to Loa Mong Hay), Buenos Aires (to Miguel Angel Estrella) and Prague (to Jelena Silajdzic), while one international Nansen medal was awarded to the United Nations Volunteers.